

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 /012 R

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DRAFTED BY S/CCT:JTBROWNE

APPROVED BY S/CCT- ROBERT A. FEAREY

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O 032347Z JUL 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 158349

FOLLOWING REPEAT USDAO BEIRUT 402 ACTION SECSTATE SECDEF
JCS DIA USCINCEUR JUSMMAT TURKEY USDAO ANKARA INFO TUSLOG
DET 26 ANKARA DATED 2 JUL 75

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L 405 JUL75 CINCEUR FOR ECJ2-0

SUBJ: ABDUCTION OF COL ERNEST R. MORGAN (U)

A. MY 011135ZJUL75.

1. (C) AS OF 1300Z, THIS DATE, NO INFORMATION
HAS SURFACED CONCERNING MORGAN'S WHEREABOUTS. AS STATED
IN OUR MSG 396 (REF A), IMAM MUSSA SADR, PRES SUPREME
ISLAMIC SHI-ITE COUNCIL, WHO HAS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE
WITH MAJOR PALESTINIAN GROUPS HAS BEEN APPROACHED THROUGH
HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY TO ASSIST FINDING MORGAN. IMAM
SADR, IN PRESENCE OF ABU HASSAN SALAMEH, FATAH SECURITY
CHIEF, AND ZOUHEIR MOHSEN, SAIQA CHIEF, IS REPORTED TO
HAVE SAID "WE WANT THE MAN (MORGAN) BACK. OUR AMERICAN
FREINDS CONSIDER HIM VERY IMPORTANT". IF MORGAN IS
IN HANDS OF ONE OF MAJOR PALESTINIAN GROUPS, PRESSURE
BY IMAM WILL LIKELY PROMPT HIS RELEASE. ON OTHER
HAND, IF HE IS IN HANDS OF ONE OF THE SMALL, RADICAL
SPLINTER GROUPS, OBTAINING HIS RELEASE WILL BE MORE
DIFFICULT.

2. (C) TODAY'S CEASE FIRE, WHICH IS APPARENTLY
HOLDING, RAISES MORE HOPE OF FINDING AND OB-
TAINING MORGAN'S RELEASE AS COMMUNICATION CHANNELS
BETWEEN ALL PARTIES IMPROVE.

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3. (C) COLS BREMER (ARMA) AND HUNT (DATT/ALUSNA) CALLED

ON MR. GEORGE KHALIFI AND HIS SON AT NEW MELKART HOTEL THIS A.M. IN ATTEMPT TO GAIN FURTHER INFO. MR. KHALIFI, OWNER OF HOTEL, WAS NOT PRESENT ON SUNDAY 29 JUNE WHEN MORGAN CHECKED IN. ACCORDING TO MR. KHALIFI (SENIOR), HIS HOTEL HAS AN AGREEMENT WITH PAA WHEREBY LATTER SENDS A NUMBER OF ITS RON-ING PASSENGERS TO THE NEW MELKART. MR. KHALIFI (JUNIOR) WAS PRESENT IN HOTEL ON 29 JUNE, AND HE CHECKED MORGAN IN THAT MORNING. HE SAID MORGAN WAS DRESSED IN SLACKS, OPEN NECK SHIRT AND SPORT JACKET AND THAT HE THOUGHT MORGAN WAS DRESSED THE SAME WAY WHEN LATTER LEFT THE HOTEL THAT EVENING. KHALIFI (JUNIOR) SAID MORGAN HAD SEVERAL DRINKS BEFORE HE LEFT THE HOTEL AROUND 1800L.

KHALIFI (JUNIOR) SAID MORGAN'S ABSENCE WAS NOT NOTICED UNTIL MORNING 30 JUNE, WHEN THE PAA BUS CAME BY HOTEL TO TAKE MORGAN TO AIRPORT FOR HIS ONWARD FLIGHT. AFTER HIS INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT MORGAN WAS NOT IN HOTEL, AND AFTER HE WAS TOLD BY PAA THAT MORGAN HAD MISSED HIS FLT, KHALIFI (JUNIOR) ASKED THE TAXI DRIVER IF HE KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MORGAN. IT WAS AT THAT POINT THAT KHALIFI (JUNIOR) FIRST LEARNED THAT MORGAN HAD BEEN ABDUCTED BY ARMED MEN THE PREVIOUS EVENING (THE TAXI DRIVER HAD GONE OFF DUTY THE PREVIOUS EVENING WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MORGAN. HIS FAILURE TO DO SO IS NOT TYPICAL OF LOCAL CONDUCT UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS). MR. SALIM HANNA, PAA EMPLOYEE STAYING AT THE HOTEL, OVERHEARD THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN KHALIFI (JUNIOR) AND THE TAXI DRIVER AND DECIDED THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY SHOULD BE NOTIFIED. HANNA THEN CALLED EMBASSY. BEFORE LEAVING THE HOTEL, DATT OBTAINED KEYS TO COL MORGAN'S LUGGAGE, WHICH IS NOW IN EMBASSY CUSTODY.

4. YOU WILL BE IMMEDIATELY ADVISED OF ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

ADS - 31DEC77.

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